

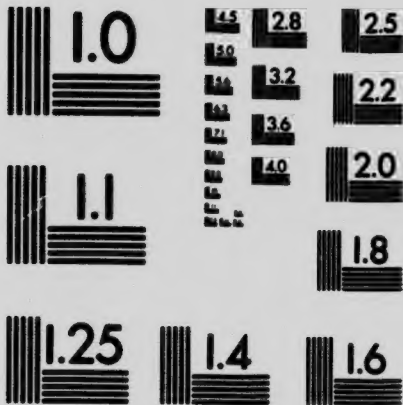
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Second Series

PAPERS FOR WAR TIME. No. 18

THE CURE FOR WAR



BY

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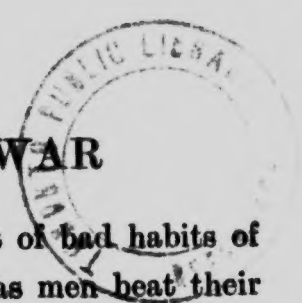
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BASIS OF PUBLICATION

This series of Papers is based on the following convictions :

1. That Great Britain was in August morally bound to declare war and is no less bound to carry the war to a decisive issue ;
2. That the war is none the less an outcome and a revelation of the un-Christian principles which have dominated the life of Western Christendom and of which both the Church and the nation need to repent ;
3. That followers of Christ, and members of the Church, are linked to one another in a fellowship which transcends all divisions of nationality or race ;
4. That the Christian duties of love and forgiveness are as binding in time of war as in time of peace ;
5. That Christians are bound to recognize the insufficiency of mere compulsion for overcoming evil and to place supreme reliance upon spiritual forces and in particular upon the power and method of the Cross ;
6. That only in proportion as Christian principles dictate the terms of settlement will a real and lasting peace be secured ;
7. That it is the duty of the Church to make an altogether new effort to realize and apply to all the relations of life its own positive ideal of brotherhood and fellowship ;
8. That with God all things are possible.



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WAR, nowadays, is mainly the result of bad habits of thought. Nations do not go to war, as men beat their wives, in a sudden fit of anger, or because they are tempted to do what they know to be wrong, as clerks rob the till; they go to war because they have persuaded themselves by wrong thinking that they have a right to go to war, and that this right is greater than all the wrong they will do. In every quarrel between nations one at least is in the wrong; one, if not both, has learnt to think of war as a proper means of getting what it wants or fulfilling its destiny or what not; and there must be a confirmed habit of perverse thinking in a nation before it can persist in a policy which, it knows, may lead to war.

Before this war began, there were people, not in Germany alone but in all the countries now at war, who talked about the benefits of war or about the right of a nation to go to war so that it might fulfil its national destiny. I doubt if there are any who think so now. We see the evil, what it is; and we no longer think there can be any greater evils that it could cure. But the question for us is how are we, in the future, to preserve ourselves from falling into those bad habits of thought which make

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war possible. How to preserve ourselves, not the Germans ; for when of two parties each concerns itself with the morals of the other, the result is that each continues to lament the immorality of the other, and with good reason. A moral effort cannot be vicarious ; and, if you would make any one good, make yourself. It may be, as I believe, that the Germans made this war wrongly and that we were right to withstand them, that they had been for years falling more and more into bad habits of thought which led them into this war ; but it is true also, I believe, that they were encouraged in their bad habits by the conduct and the thoughts of all the peoples of Europe. There was a bad habit of thinking about war everywhere ; and, if the first crime in action was theirs, it is not for us to protest that we never could have been, and never in the future can be, capable of it.

Thinking in Germany was in favour of war ; at least one man of genius praised it so eloquently that he made it seem good to himself and many others. But what man of genius here has made peace seem good to us ? We have had our advocates of peace, who deserve praise ; but they have not had the passion or exercised the moral contagion of Nietzsche. He was morally perverse, no doubt ; but he was morally passionate and therefore stronger in influence than our pacifists who make their just and reasonable appeals to self-interest. They tell us that war is foolish, as it is ; he said that it was noble and glorious, which it is not ; but he said it with a power that came from the perverse conviction of his whole nature, and we need

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a genius as passionate as his, but not perverse, to put all the nations of Europe in love with peace.

Why have we not produced such a genius? It is not vain to ask ourselves that question, for genius is not lonely but fed by the ideas and disposition of all ordinary men. Nietzsche was a symptom; and if we have shown no symptom of equal but contrary power, it is the fault of all of us. We may not have loved war, but we have not hated it, or loved peace, strongly enough to make some man of genius the mouthpiece of our common love and hatred. We have been neither hot nor cold, and in Laodicea there is no gospel either of God or of the Devil to fire the world. In Laodicea there are only platitudes; and so to Nietzsche England seemed the home of platitude, and insular platitude which only an Englishman could be dull enough to utter and believe. That is why we, as a nation, have failed in our duty to the thought of the world. We may not have talked nonsense passionately; but we have not told the truth passionately either; and so, when we have told it, no one has listened to us.

It is a curious fact that, before the war broke out, the merchants and financiers of every country were continually saying that their country desired peace above all things, since war would ruin it. They said this, and the statesmen echoed it, and no doubt they all meant it; and yet war has come and is bringing the ruin which they feared; and all the nations, knowing what ruin they might expect, have rushed unanimously into war and swear that they will fight to the bitter end. So the mood of Nietzsche

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prevails ; and no talk about self-interest can withstand it, even when self-interest is on the same side as right. Not only the passions, but the emotions also are for war, and to them the platitudes of self-interest sound only sordid. The poet has seen the truth of it in his *Gods of War* :

How wanes thine Empire, Prince of Peace !
With the fleet circling of the suns
The ancient gods their power increase.
Lo, how thine own anointed ones
Do pour upon the warring bands
The devil's blessings from their hands.

There is a return to the ancient gods ; and their worshippers prevail over those who have no gods at all. Those to whom the Prince of Peace is an absurdity are stronger than those to whom He is a phrase. For nearly two thousand years men have been talking about Him ; and they still talk about Him as if He were a prince who reigned but did not govern ; and the governance is in the hands of ministers who are not His and whom the poet, who hates fictions, would have us acknowledge as the true rulers of our minds.

So there is a religion of war, and nothing will overcome it but the old religion of peace made young again. The religion of war always lies in wait for us, because it suits the mind of the natural man, or rather that bodily part of him which is called natural. In modern times it has been supported with scientific doctrines, so that it seems not merely pagan but also rational. You can talk at the same time about the God of battles and about the survival

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of the fittest. In Germany the Kaiser talks about the first, and the professors about the second. But there is national passion behind both ; and their religious feeling is for the old gods who are national gods, whatever name they may call them by. And against these old gods and this fierce religious feeling all arguments for peace based upon self-interest are powerless ; and since this war broke out we all know it.

There is, as I have said, an easy and natural alliance between intellect and passion in favour of war, between pagan religion and materialist theory. To withstand it we need a like alliance between intellect and passion in favour of peace ; that is to say, we need to rediscover Christianity, not as a theological system nor as a system of morals only, but as a way of life both beautiful and agreeable to the intelligence. We need suddenly to be aware of it as something which can be practised like a fine piece of music, so that, whenever we fail to practise it, we may recognize the failure and discord in our lives. But before we can do this, we must see clearly what it is, as the musician sees the music. We must not confuse it with some other way or try to produce a compromise between them. The first claim which Christianity makes is that it is a way for all men in all possible circumstances. Deny that claim ; say that it is a way for individuals and not for nations ; and it is no longer Christianity. If once it is touched by compromise, it loses all its glory both for the spirit and for the mind. Reason and passion consent to it together only when it is utterly accepted, when any

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falling short of it is seen to be failure and not adjustment. Doubtless the Christian is always falling short ; but when he is, he recognizes his failure, like the musician who plays a false note. And this recognition makes a Christian of him as it makes an artist of the musician. But, if we apply this test to nations now, there are no Christian nations. They never fall short ; they only compromise. They never confess their sins, but only their grandchildren do it for them. And because there is this compromise about Christianity where nations are concerned, Christianity has no power to keep the peace between them ; indeed, as soon as war breaks out it is seen not to be Christianity at all, but a number of national religions with national gods, all calling themselves by the same name.

But this compromise does not merely destroy Christianity as between nations ; it destroys it also as between individual men and women. For Christianity is international, or it is nothing. And if you believe that it stops at the individual and cannot be practised by the nation, you fall necessarily into habits of thought that are not Christian. The integrity of your mind, the purity of your passion, the consistency of your reason, is destroyed, and you begin to worship idols or nothing at all. Thus, when nations are rivals with each other and consent to the idea of rivalry as being, not a weakness of human nature, but a necessary and right result of national distinctions, they fall quickly into the belief that they themselves have a superiority of race by reason of which their cause, whatever it may be, is sanctified, and their contempt for

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other nations is righteous. This difference of race, if it has any reality at all, which it often has not, is a physical difference. It may be that Teutons and Latins and Anglo-Saxons are born with different bodies ; but assuredly, if the soul exists, there is no racial distinction between their souls. As Crashaw said, 'Souls are not Spaniards too.' And Christianity said that also to the slaves whom it welcomed into its universal brotherhood. But the doctrine of race insists that souls are Teuton or Slav or Latin, that some men are born in a state of racial salvation and others of racial damnation from which they cannot be degraded or exalted ; and naturally each nation which holds the doctrine of race believes in its own salvation and sacred mission. So this question of racial superiority can only be settled by conflict, and even that will never settle it, for, as we know from history, nations rise and fall and rise again, and a nation that is beaten once in war will not therefore believe in its racial damnation but will try to prove its salvation in some future conflict. The doctrine of race is always preached by nations lately victorious. The Germans preach it now, and it is discredited among us only because they preach it and have wearied us with their talk about the superiority of the Teutonic race. A little time ago we ourselves were always talking about the superiority of the Anglo-Saxons and the decadence of the Latins. The future of the world, we said, was with the Anglo-Saxons ; and all the while we had to discover, as we have now discovered, that there is no such thing as an Anglo-Saxon or a Latin race.

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These races are idols worshipped by nations for whom there is no international religion ; and they worship idols and believe nonsense because, as nations, they are not Christians.

The Christian way, for those who follow it, is not a game which they play to make them happy. They follow it because they believe it to be consistent with the nature of the universe, because it leads them to discoveries which they hail with a scientific passion of delight, because they find in it a rightness which is intellectual and æsthetic no less than moral. Other ways lead to nonsense and ugliness no less than to wickedness, and often the nonsense and the ugliness are apparent before the wickedness. Think, for instance, of all the nonsense which the nations of Europe have talked about each other, and of all the vulgarity of their international manners, before they fell into this war. If individuals behaved thus, and talked thus, they would be put to shame quickly by the laughter of their friends. For we have some Christian wisdom and manners as individuals, but none as nations. We have some notion that rivalry between individuals is not what they live for, but a nation, for us, is the rival of another nation, as if it were a football team and as if all life were a meaningless physical game with rules made by men. That, indeed, is the difference between the Christian way and other ways. They are games with rules which men have made out of their own misunderstanding of the universe, rules arbitrary and inconsistent with each other ; but the Christian way is like an art. It has no rules, but rather principles, based upon truths of

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which men become aware by following the principles. And as the bad artist understands less about art the more he practises it badly, so we nations of Europe understand less about right living and thinking and feeling, the further we, as nations, depart from the Christian way. And now we are faced with the result of our departure in this war, which reduces all our rivalries to an absurdity, as if we were game-cocks fighting out of mere pugnacity until we were all desperately wounded or dead.

And the worst of it is that we have to fight and should do wrong if we abstained. This particular cause of ours is just and the immediate sin of this particular war is our enemy's. But the Europe in which our enemy became capable of this sin is the Europe of all of us. We have all been more or less infected by that evil principle upon which the Germans have acted. They believed that we should do what they have done if we had the chance. They are the criminals, made by bad social conditions, and we should think of ourselves as policemen, not as angels fighting devils. These Prussians are men like ourselves, perverted by a more resolute idolatry than ours, more actively foolish and dangerous because they have thought and willed more clearly in a wrong direction. But still they are men, and if we believe that the virus working in them is peculiarly Prussian we shall soon be believing their false doctrine of race again, and they will not be men to us at all, but merely Prussians, and everlasting, inevitable enemies.

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Many of us have believed that the Christian way as between nations was only a beautiful, impossible dream. The reality is the struggle for life, nationally organized, decently concealed in peace, openly conducted in war. And now the war has come, and we see that it is a foolish game which we have to play because our enemies will play it. Even the nations that win will be far less assured of life than if they had stayed at peace, and they will certainly not destroy the nations that lose. The Prussians themselves will be sick of their doctrine before the war is over. They at least have reduced it to an absurdity; and now is the time for us to discover the other doctrine that shall take its place.

I say *discover*, for it is useless for us to talk the old platitudes about peace that have failed. We need to surprise ourselves and the world with our own thought about the Christian way, with our own enlargement of the Christian doctrine. And we can only do that if we attempt now at once to think and feel in a Christian manner, both about Germany and about ourselves. That would be a very small and humble beginning; but it is the only one possible. We shall find it strange and disagreeable at first, and it will deprive us of the comfort which most of us naturally seek in the anxiety and sorrow of war, the comfort of warm and eager hatred. We shall have to begin by telling ourselves things we can hardly believe; as that the Germans are just as much convinced of the justice of their cause as we are; that they are a nation in many respects superior to us; that their crimes in

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the war are greater than their guilt ; that if they worship the idol of militarism, we have been worshipping an idol of money and have talked as much nonsense about our idol as they about theirs. We can enjoy ourselves in thinking that they are outside the pale, but it is also a fact that they are enjoying themselves in thinking us outside the pale. We believe that we have the future of the world in our hands ; and they believe that it is in theirs. Each of us contends that there is a momentous and inevitable rivalry between two opposed systems and what is light to one is darkness to the other. We must detach ourselves from this romantic view, and at first it will be a cold and painful process. But Christianity is not romantic. It bids men see themselves as if they were not themselves. It bids them cease to love their own weaknesses, so that they may love something better ; and above all it bids them not to confuse self-love with the love of God.

Into this confusion we are always falling, so that men have worshipped their own appetites in the past and are ready to worship their own country in the present. One could, I suppose, easily find a scientific jargon to justify Phallic worship, and there is a current scientific jargon by which country-worship is justified. Nor can it easily be confuted, if you start by assuming that man's business in this life is the struggle for life. Christianity does not argue that point ; no one can argue it. If a man makes the struggle for life his business, it is his business. But Christianity says that if you follow the Christian way

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you will in time see that it is absurd to make the struggle for life your business. You will see that you yourself are absurd so long as you are absorbed in yourself and the prolongation of your existence. And as it is with men, so it is with nations. Apply the Christian teaching to them and it will destroy the belief in their necessary rivalry, just as much as if they were individual men. Christianity tells us that we should not love ourselves, but other men ; and so it tells us, not that we should not love our own country, for that consists of other men besides ourselves, but that we should love other countries too. For the diversity of mankind and of all created things is the very occasion of love, and if we are to love at all we must love what is different from ourselves. We have our idea of a country taken from our own, and the barbaric and heathen notion is that we should hate other countries and the ideas taken from them. It was once perhaps an unconscious result of the struggle for life, but now, where it prevails, it is a conscious result of the theory of the struggle for life, of the theory that that struggle is a nation's main business, even if it is not a man's. But Christianity must smile at this result in the case of the nation as of the man. If you are a reasoning being, and act and think as a reasoning being, how can you allow your values and emotions to be dictated to you by your material interests ? There is an end of reason altogether and a relapse into mere instinct if you are to hate other nations and their way of life and all their achievements because you think there is a necessary

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rivalry between your own nation and them. Christianity does not argue about the necessary rivalry. It says—Pursue the Christian way. Seek to love rather than to hate, and you will find that the rivalry disappears. And here I would insist that Love is something quite different from admiration. Rivals may admire each other and try to imitate what they admire so that they may overcome their rivals. That has been the practice of the Germans, and by reason of it they have more and more lost their own ideas of excellence. They are eclectics and attain to a characterless and joyless efficiency which is never quite first-rate, as it is never spontaneous. But love is a sudden, undesigning delight in a character different from your own. It is something that happens to your mind, a gift from heaven; but you must keep your mind open to it. You must regard all rivalry as the obstacle to it and to the wisdom and happiness it will bring you.

If we think for a moment, we must see that all the nations have their own excellences peculiar to them, as we do see their diverse excellence in the arts. And if we could love them for these different excellences and for the manner in which they are expressed in the national life, as we love Michelangelo or Mozart or Shakespeare for what is expressed in their art, then the very thought of war with them would be abhorrent to us. We know how the world has felt about the ruin of Rheims Cathedral, as if it were a wanton cruelty done to the spirit of the past. It was the work of a great age with which none

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of us feels any rivalry because it is in the past. But every nation now is doing its own peculiar work which deserves our love like that masterpiece, and it is only the heathen doctrine of rivalry that makes it possible for us to ruin that work in war. For us our own country is like Rheims Cathedral. We know the good there is in it and its promise for the world, and we cannot bear to think of the Germans let loose upon it to destroy like madmen. But, as a matter of fact, is ours better than the other countries? There is no need for us, because we love it, to think so. We love it because we know it, and we should love them if we knew them as well and if the idea of rivalry were removed from our minds. Therefore our task is, even now in the midst of this war, to remove the idea of rivalry from our minds and all the illusions that spring from it. A nation is made up of men and women, and it cannot be Christian to other nations unless they in their thoughts and words are Christian to other nations. It is wrong thinking that causes war, and the thinking is done not by an abstract nation but by the men and women who compose it.